

Hon. J. V. Gridley

ADDRESS

IN FAVOR OF

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE,

FOR THE ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO THE

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.

BEFORE THE

JUDICIARY COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATURE OF NEW YORK, IN
THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER, JANUARY 23, 1867,

IN BEHALF OF THE

AMERICAN EQUAL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION.

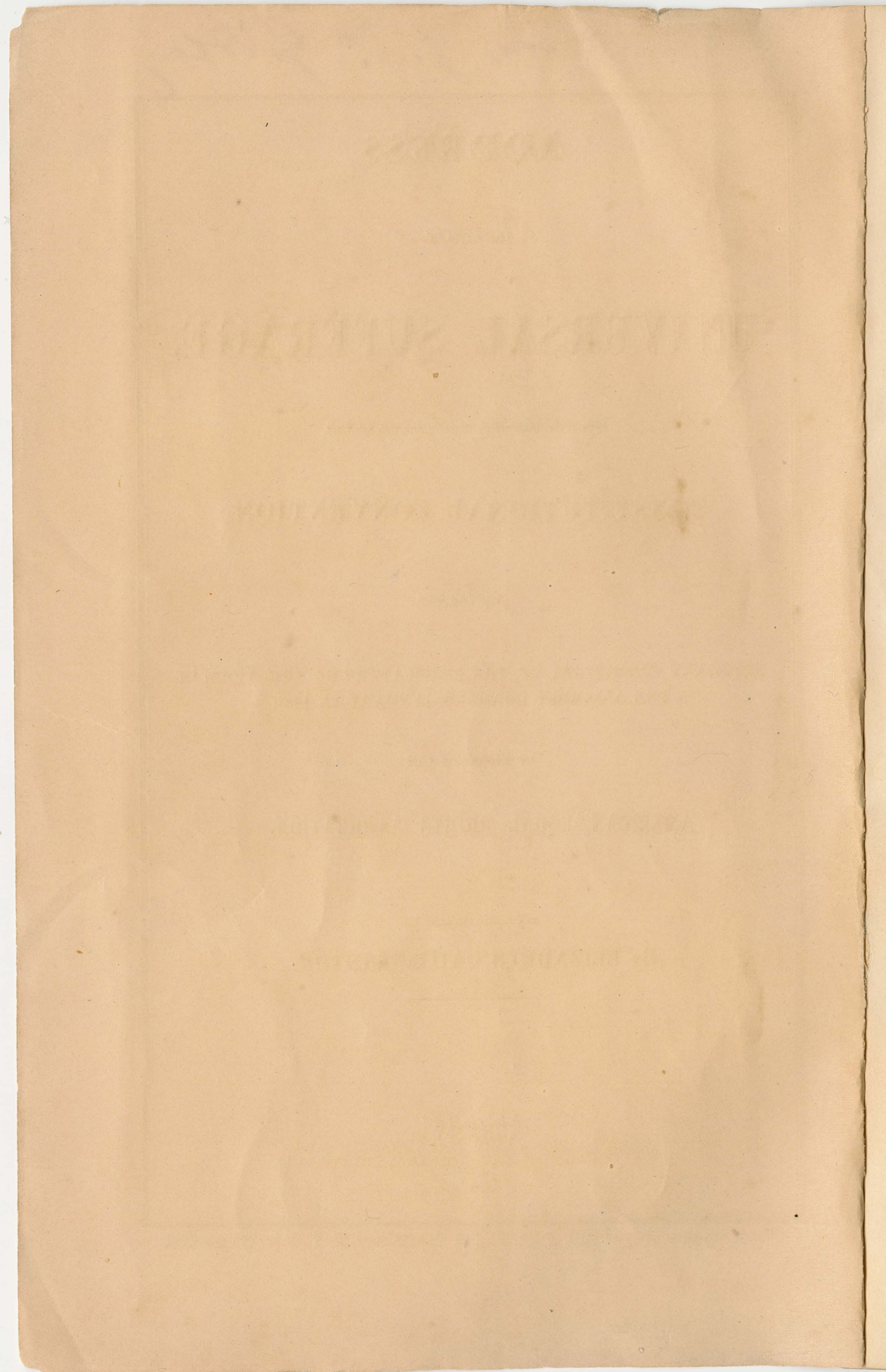
BY ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.

ALBANY:

WEED, PARSONS AND COMPANY, PRINTERS.

1867.

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CONSTITUTION

OF THE AMERICAN EQUAL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION.

PREAMBLE.

WHEREAS, By the war, society is once more resolved into its original elements, and in the reconstruction of our government we again stand face to face with the broad question of natural rights, all associations based on special claims for special classes are too narrow and partial for the hour; therefore, from the baptism of this second revolution — purified and exalted through suffering — seeing with a holier vision that the peace, prosperity and perpetuity of the Republic rest on EQUAL RIGHTS TO ALL, we, to-day, assemble in our Eleventh National Woman's Rights Convention, bury the woman in the citizen, and our organization in that of the American Equal Rights Association.

ARTICLE I.

This organization shall be known as The American Equal Rights Association.

ARTICLE II.

The object of this Association shall be to secure Equal Rights to all American citizens, especially the right of suffrage, irrespective of race, color or sex.

ARTICLE III.

Any person who consents to the principles of this Association and contributes to its treasury, may be a member, and be entitled to speak and vote in its meetings.

ARTICLE IV.

The officers of this Association shall be a President, Vice-Presidents, Corresponding Secretaries, a Recording Secretary, a Treasurer, and an Executive Committee of not less than seven, nor more than fifteen members.

ARTICLE V.

The Executive Committee shall have power to enact their by-laws, fill any vacancy in their body, and in the offices of Secretary and Treasurer; employ agents; determine what compensation shall be paid to agents, and to the Corresponding Secretaries; direct the Treasurer in the application of all moneys, and call special meetings of the Society. They shall make arrangements for all meetings of the Society; make an annual written report of their doings, the expenditures and funds of the Society; and shall hold stated meetings, and adopt the most energetic measures in their power to advance the objects of the Society.

ARTICLE VI.

The Annual Meeting of the Association shall be held each year at such time and place as the Executive Committee may direct, when the accounts of the Treasurer shall be presented, the annual report read, appropriate addresses delivered, the officers chosen, and such other business transacted as shall be deemed expedient.

ARTICLE VII.

Any Equal Rights Association, founded on the same principles, may become auxiliary to this Association. The officers of each auxiliary shall be *ex officio* members of the Parent Association, and shall be entitled to deliberate and vote in the transactions of its concerns.

ARTICLE VIII.

This Constitution may be amended, at any regular meeting of the Society, by a vote of two-thirds of the members present, provided the amendments proposed have been previously submitted in writing to the Executive Committee, at least one month before the meeting at which they are to be proposed.

Done in the city of New York, on the tenth day of May, in the year 1866.

ADDRESS.

Gentlemen of the Judiciary Committees, and Members of the Legislature:

I appear before you at this time, to urge on you the justice of securing to all the people of the State the right to vote for delegates to the coming Constitutional Convention. The discussion of this right involves the consideration of the whole question of suffrage; and especially those sections of your Constitution which interpose insurmountable qualifications to its exercise.

As representatives of the people, your right to regulate all that pertains to the coming Constitutional Convention is absolute. It is for you to say when and where this convention shall be held; how many delegates shall be chosen, and what classes shall be represented. This is your right. It is the opinion of many of the ablest men of the country that, in a revision of a constitution, the State is, for the time being, resolved into its original elements, and that all disfranchised classes should have a voice in such revision and be represented in such convention. To secure this to the people of the State, is clearly your duty.

Says Judge BEACH LAWRENCE, in a letter to Hon. CHARLES SUMNER, "A State constitution must originate with and be assented to by a majority of the people, including as well those whom it disfranchises as those whom it invests with the suffrage." And as there is nothing in the present Constitution of the State of New York, to prevent women, or black men from voting for, or being elected as delegates to a Constitutional Convention, there is no reason why the Legislature should not enact that the

people elect their delegates to said Convention, irrespective of sex or color.

The Legislatures of 1801 and 1821, furnish you a precedent for extending to disfranchised classes the right to vote for delegates to a Constitutional Convention. Though the Constitution of the State restricted the right of suffrage to every male inhabitant who possessed a freehold to the value of £20, or rented a tenement at the yearly value of forty shillings, and had been rated and actually paid taxes to the State, the Legislatures of those years passed laws setting aside all property limitations, and providing that all men—black and white, rich and poor—should vote for delegates to said Conventions.

The act recommending a convention for the purpose of considering the parts of the Constitution of this State, respecting the number of senators and members of Assembly—and also for the consideration of the 23d article of said Constitution, relative to the right of nomination to office—“but with no other power or authority whatsoever,” passed April 6th, 1801. Session Laws 1801, chap. 69, page 190, sec 2, says :

“And be it further enacted, that the number of delegates chosen shall be the same as the number of members of Assembly from the respective cities and counties of the State, and that all free male citizens of this State, of the age of twenty-one years and upward, shall be admitted to vote for such delegates, and that any person of that description shall be eligible.”

The above law was passed by the Legislature of 1801, which derived its authority from the first Constitution of the State.

The act recommending a convention of the people of this State, passed March 13, 1821. Session Laws of 1821, act 90, page 83, sec. 1.

“Persons entitled to vote :”

“All free male citizens, of the age of twenty-one years or upward, who shall possess a freehold in this State, or who shall

“have been actually rated and paid taxes to this State, or who
 “shall have been actually enrolled in the militia of this State, or
 “in a legal, volunteer, or uniform corps, and shall have served
 “therein either as an officer or private, or who shall have been or
 “now are, by law, exempt from taxation or militia duty, or who
 “shall have been assessed to work on the public roads and high-
 “ways, and shall have worked thereon, or shall have paid a com-
 “mutation therefor, according to law, shall be allowed during the
 “three days of such election to vote by ballot as aforesaid in the
 “town or ward in which they shall actually reside.”

Extract from Sec. 6th, Act 90:

“And be it further enacted, that the number of delegates to be
 “chosen shall be the same as the number of members of Assembly
 “from the respective cities and counties of this State, and that the
 “same qualification for voters shall be required on the election for
 “delegates, as is prescribed in the first section of this act, and
 “none other. * * * * And that all persons entitled to vote
 “by this law for delegates, shall be eligible to be elected.”

Extracts from the first Constitution of the State of New
 York, under and by virtue of which the Legislatures sat,
 which passed the acts of 1801 and 1821, from which the
 extracts above are taken.

Sec. 7. Qualification of electors:

“That every male inhabitant of full age, who shall have person-
 “ally resided for six months within one of the counties of this
 “State, immediately preceding the day of election, shall at such
 “election be entitled to vote for representatives of the said county
 “in Assembly, if during the time aforesaid, he shall have been a
 “freeholder possessing a freehold of the value of £20, within the
 “said county, or have rented a tenement therein of a yearly value
 “of forty shillings, and been rated and actually paid taxes to this
 “State.”

SEC. 10. “And this Convention doth further, in the name and
 “by the authority of the good people of this State, ordain, deter-
 “mine and declare that the *Senate* of the State of New York
 “shall consist of *twenty-four* freeholders, to be chosen out of the
 “body of the freeholders, and they be chosen by the freeholders

“of this State, possessed of freeholds of the value of £100 over
“and above all debts charged thereon.”

By section 17, “the qualifications for voters for Governor are
“made the same as those for Senators.”

The laws above quoted show this striking fact: Those men, black and white, prohibited from voting for members of the Assembly, were permitted to vote for delegates to said Conventions; and more than this, on each occasion, they were eligible to seats in the body called to frame the *fundamental law*—the fundamental law from which Governors, Senators and members derive their existence.

The Constitutional Convention of Rhode Island, in 1842, affords another precedent of the power of the Legislature to extend the suffrage to disfranchised classes.

The disfranchisement of any class of citizens is in express violation of the spirit of our own Constitution. Art. 1, sec. 1:

“No member of this State shall be disfranchised or deprived
“of any of the rights or privileges secured to any citizen thereof,
“unless by the law of the land and the judgment of his peers.”

Now, women, and negroes not worth two hundred and fifty dollars, however weak and insignificant, are surely “members of the State.” The law of the land is equality. The question of disfranchisement has never been submitted to the judgment of their peers. A peer is an equal. The “white male citizen” who so pompously parades himself in all our Codes and Constitutions, does not recognize women and negroes as his equals; therefore, his judgment in their case amounts to nothing.

And women and negroes constituting a majority of the people of the State, do not recognize a “white male” minority as their rightful rulers. On our republican theory that the majority governs, women and negroes should have a voice in the government of the State; and being taxed, should be represented.

In the recent debate in the Senate of the United States,

on the question of suffrage, Senator ANTHONY, of Rhode Island, said :

“Nor is it a fair statement of the case to say, that the man represents the woman, because it is an assumption on the part of the man — it is an involuntary representation on the part of the woman. Representation implies a certain delegated power, and a certain responsibility on the part of the representative toward the party represented. A representation to which the represented party does not assent, is no representation at all; but is adding insult to injury. When the American Colonies complained that they ought not to be taxed unless they were represented in the British Parliament, it would have been rather a singular answer to tell them that they were represented by Lord NORTH, or even by the EARL OF CHATHAM. The gentlemen on the other side of the Chamber, who say that the States lately in rebellion are entitled to immediate representation in this Chamber, would hardly be satisfied if we should tell them that my friend from Massachusetts represented South Carolina, and my friend from Michigan represented Alabama. They would hardly be satisfied with that kind of representation. Nor have we any more right to assume that the women are satisfied with the representation of the men. Where has been the assembly at which this right of representation was conferred? Where was the compact made? It is wholly an assumption.”

“White males” are the nobility of this country; they are the privileged order, who have legislated as unjustly for women and negroes, as have the nobles of England for their disfranchised classes.

The existence of the English House of Commons, is a strong fact to prove that one class cannot legislate for another. Perhaps it may be necessary, in this transition period of our civilization, to create a Lower House for women and negroes, lest the dreadful example of Massachusetts, nay, worse, should be repeated here, and women, as well as black men, take their places beside our Dutch nobility in the councils of the State. If the history of England has proved that white men of different grades cannot legislate with justice for one another, how can

you, Honorable Gentlemen, legislate for women and negroes, who, by your customs, creeds and codes, and common consent, are placed under the ban of inferiority? If you dislike this view of the case, and claim that woman is your superior, and, therefore, you place her above all troublesome legislation, to shield her by your protecting care from the rough winds of life, I have simply to say, your statute books are a sad commentary on that position. Your laws degrade, rather than exalt woman; your customs cripple, rather than free; your system of taxation is alike ungenerous and unjust.

In demanding suffrage for the black man of the South, the dominant party recognizes the fact that as a freedman he is no longer a part of the family, therefore, his master is no longer his representative, and as he will now be liable to taxation, he must also have representation. Woman, on the contrary, has never been such a part of the family as to escape taxation. Although there has been no formal proclamation giving her an individual existence, unmarried women have always had the right to property and wages; to make contracts and do business in their own name. And, even married women, by recent legislation in this State have been secured in some civil rights, at least as well secured as those classes can be who do not hold the ballot in their own hands. Woman now holds a vast amount of property in the country, and pays her full proportion of taxes, revenue included; on what principle, then, do you deny her representation? If you say women are "virtually represented" by the men of their household, I give you Senator SUMNER'S denial, in his great speech on Equal Rights, in the First Session of the 39th Congress. Quoting from JAMES OTIS, he says, "No such phrase as virtual representation was known in law or constitution. It is altogether a subtlety and illusion, wholly unfounded and absurd. We must not be cheated by any such phantom or any other fiction of law or politics, or any monkish trick of deceit or hypocrisy."

In regard to taxation without representation, Lord COKE says, "The supreme power cannot take from any man any "part of his property without his consent in person or by "representation. Taxes are not to be laid on the people" (are not women and negroes people?) "without their consent in person or by representation. The very act of "taxing those who are not represented appears to me to "deprive them of one of their most essential rights as "freemen, and, if continued, seems to be in effect an "entire disfranchisement of every civil right; for what "one civil right is worth a rush, after a man's property is "subject to be taken from him without his consent?"

In view of such opinions, is it too much to ask the men of New York, either to enfranchise women of wealth and education, or else release them from taxation? If we cannot be represented as individuals, we should not be taxed as individuals. If the "white male" will do all the voting, let him pay all the taxes. There is no logic so powerful in opening the eyes of men to their real interests as a direct appeal to their pockets. Such a release from taxation can be supported too, by your own Constitution. In art. 2, sec. 1, you say, "And no person of color shall be subject to direct taxation, unless he shall be seized and possessed of such real estate as aforesaid," referring to the \$250 qualification.

Now, a poor widow who owns a lot worth a hundred dollars or less, is taxed. Why this partiality to the black man? He may live in the quiet possession of \$249 worth of property, and not be taxed a cent. Is it on the ground of color or sex, that the black man finds greater favor in the eyes of the law than the daughters of the State? In order fully to understand this partiality, I have inquired into your practice with regard to women of color. I find that in Seneca Falls, there lives a highly estimable colored woman, by the name of Abby Gomore, who owns property to the amount of a thousand dollars, in village lots. She now pays, and always has paid, from

the time she invested her first hundred dollars, the same taxes as any other citizen — just in proportion to the value of her property, or as it is assessed.

After excluding women and “men of color,” not worth \$250, from representation, your Constitution tells us what other persons are excluded from the right of suffrage. Art. 2, sec. 2.

“Laws may be passed excluding from the right of suffrage all persons who have been or may be convicted of bribery, or larceny, or of any infamous crime, and for depriving every person who shall make, or become directly or indirectly interested in any bet or wager depending upon the result of any election, from the right to vote at such election.”

How humiliating! For respectable and law-abiding women and “men of color,” to be thrust outside the pale of political consideration with those convicted of bribery, larceny, and infamous crime; and worse than all, with those who bet on elections—for how lost to all sense of honor must that “white male citizen” be who publicly violates a wise law to which he has himself given an intelligent consent. We are ashamed, Honored Sirs, of our company. The Mohammedan forbids a “fool, a madman, or a woman” to call the hour for prayers. If it were not for the invidious classification, we might hope it was tenderness rather than contempt that moved the Mohammedan to excuse woman from so severe a duty. But for the ballot, which falls like a flake of snow upon the sod, we can find no such excuse for New York Legislators.

Art. 2d, Sec. 3d, should be read and considered by the women of the State, as it gives them a glimpse of the modes of life and surroundings of some of the privileged classes of “white male citizens” who may go to the polls:

“For the purpose of voting, no person shall be deemed to have gained or lost a residence by reason of his presence or absence while employed in the service of the United States; nor while engaged in navigating the waters of the State, or of the United

“States, or of the high seas; nor while a student of any seminary
“of learning; nor while kept at any alms house or other asylum,
“at public expense; nor while confined in any public prison.”

What an unspeakable privilege to have that precious jewel — the human soul — in a setting of *white manhood*, that thus it can pass through the Prison, the Asylum, the Alms House, the muddy waters of the Erie Canal, and come forth undimmed to appear at the ballot-box at the earliest opportunity, there to bury its crimes, its poverty, its moral and physical deformities, all beneath the rights, privileges and immunities of a citizen of the State. Just imagine the motley crew from the ten thousand dens of poverty and vice in our large cities, limping, raving, cringing, staggering up to the polls, while the loyal mothers of a million soldiers whose bones lay bleaching on every Southern plain, stand outside sad and silent witnesses of this wholesale desecration of Republican institutions. When you say it would degrade woman to go to the polls, do you not make a sad confession of your irreligious mode of observing that most sacred right of citizenship?

The ballot-box, in a Republican government, should be guarded with as much love and care as was the Ark of the Lord among the children of Israel. Here, where we have no heaven-anointed kings or priests, law must be to us a holy thing; and the ballot-box the holy of holies; for on it depends the safety and stability of our institutions. I, for one, gentlemen, am not willing to be thus represented. I claim to understand the interests of the nation better than yonder pauper in your alms house, than the unbalanced graduate from your asylum and prison, or the popinjay of twenty-one from your seminary of learning, or the traveler on the tow-path of the Erie canal. No wonder, that with such voters as Art. 2, sec. 3 welcomes to the polls, we have these contradictory laws and constitutions. No wonder, that with such voters, sex and color should be exalted above loyalty, virtue, wealth and education. I warn you, legislators of the State of New York,

that you need the moral power of wise and thoughtful women in your political councils, to outweigh the incoming tide of poverty, ignorance and vice that threatens our very existence as a nation. Have not the women of the republic an equal interest with yourselves in the government, in free institutions, in progressive ideas, and in the success of the most liberal political measures? Remember, in your last election, the republican majority in this State was only fourteen thousand, all told. If you would not see the liberal party swamped in the next Presidential campaign, treble your majority by enfranchising those classes who would support it in all just and merciful legislation.

Have no fears that woman would be demoralized by an extension of rights, by meeting man at the polls, in the caucus, or the lobby, or the halls of legislation; that instead of elevating the tone of political life, she herself would be degraded. The experiment of woman's civilizing power has been twice tried on a large scale in our own country, within your recollection. In California and Oregon, when the population, being chiefly male, was rapidly tending to savageism, women, in large numbers, were sent out, and in both cases, order and decency were soon restored to life in those Territories. I do not argue from this that woman is better than man, but the necessity of the sexes being together in the whole work of life; that thus all that is noble, generous and beautiful in human nature may be called forth. The present false position of woman, as inferior, minion, dependent—the present isolation of the sexes, is the fruitful cause of the corruption, disorder and antagonism of the political, religious and social world. “We shall have,” says HENRY WARD BEECHER, “a perfect, crystal idea of the State, with all its contents, only when man understands the injunction, ‘What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.’”

The wheel of progress moves onward, and man must,

in the nature of things, throw off old customs, creeds and codes, as the snake sheds its skin in the new growth, and from the dead letters of the past, emerge into a higher civilization. History shows that each generation has been marked by some new idea, alike tending to the greater freedom and equality of man; and those who, in their blindness or folly, have tried to block this onward march, have invariably been ground to powder. We see a signal instance of this in the summary manner in which an indignant people have ridden rough-shod over ANDREW JOHNSON and his satellites — showing that even the head of a nation is nothing, but as he represents the leading ideas of his generation. They only are immortal who link the future to the past, and roll on the triumphal car of progress to the brighter and the better day.

The extension of suffrage is the political idea of our day, agitating alike the leading minds of both continents. The question of debate in the long past has been the rights of races. This, in our country, was settled by the war, when the black man was declared free and worthy to bear arms in defense of the republic, and the last remnants of aristocracy were scattered before our Northern hosts like chaff in the whirlwind. We have now come to the broader idea of *individual* rights. An idea already ably debated in Congress and out, by Republicans, Democrats and Abolitionists, who, in common with the best writers and thinkers of the day the world over, base all rights of society and government on those of the individual. Each one of you has a right to everything in earth and air, on land and sea, to the whole world of thought, to all that is needful for soul and body, and there is no limit to the exercise of your rights, but in the infringement of the rights of another; and the moment you pass that limit you are on forbidden ground you violate the law of individual life, and breed disorder and confusion in the whole social system.

Where, gentlemen, did *you* get the right to deny the

ballot to all women and black men not worth \$250? If this right of suffrage is not an individual right, from what abstract place and abstract body did *you* get it? Is this right of franchise a conventional arrangement, a privilege that society or government may grant or withhold at pleasure? Said GRATZ BROWN, in the Senate of the United States, in the recent discussion on the "bill to regulate the elective franchise in the District of Columbia :"

"Mr. President, I say here on the floor of the American Senate
 "I stand for universal suffrage; and, as a matter of fundamental
 "principle, do not recognize the right of society to limit it on any
 "ground of race or sex. I will go farther and say, that I recog-
 "nize the right of franchise as being intrinsically a natural right.
 "I do not believe that society is authorized to impose any limita-
 "tions upon it that do not spring out of the necessities of the
 "social state itself. Sir, I have been shocked, in the course of this
 "debate, to hear Senators declare this right only a conventional
 "and political arrangement, a privilege yielded to you and me, and
 "others; not a right in any sense, only a concession! Mr. Presi-
 "dent, I do not hold my liberties by any such tenure. On the
 "contrary, I believe that whenever you establish that doctrine;
 "whenever you crystalize that idea in the public mind of this
 "country, you ring the death-knell of American liberties!!"

The demand we to-day make, is not the idiosyncrasy of a few discontented minds, but a universal movement. Woman is everywhere throwing off the lethargy of ages, and is already close upon your heels in the whole realm of thought—in art, science, literature and government. Everything heralds the dawn of the new era when moral power is to govern nations.

In asking you, Honorable Gentlemen, to extend suffrage to woman, we do not press on you the risk and responsibility of a new step, but simply to try a measure that has been already proved wise and safe the world over. So long as political power was absolute and hereditary, woman shared it with man by birth. In Hungary and

some provinces of France and Germany, women holding this inherited right confer their right of franchise on their husbands. In 1858, in the old town of Upsal, the authorities granted the right of suffrage to fifty women holding real estate, and to thirty-one doing business in their own name. The representative their votes elected, was to sit in the House of Burgesses. In Ireland, the Court of Queen's Bench, Dublin, restored to women, in 1864, the old right of voting for town commissioners. In 1864, too, the government of Moravia decided that all women who are tax payers had the right to vote. In Canada, in 1850, an electoral privilege was conferred on women, in the hope that the Protestant might balance the Roman Catholic power in the school system. "I lived," says a friend of mine, "where I saw this right exercised for four years by female property holders, and never heard the most cultivated man, even Lord ELGIN, object to its results." Women vote in Austria, Australia, Holland and Sweden, on property qualifications. There is a bill now before the British Parliament, presented by JOHN STUART MILL, asking for household suffrage, accompanied by a petition from eleven thousand of the best educated women in England.

"The same men," says HENRY WARD BEECHER, "who will cheer the name of Queen VICTORIA in a public meeting will go home, put on their spectacles, and argue that women ought not to hold office. Was there ever a nobler woman than the Duchess of ARGYLE, who, Mr. ADAMS says, knows more of public affairs than he does. Yet there are state occasions when she must stand in Parliament with her Queen and perform appropriate public duties; and whoever thought that in so doing there was any derogation of sex? Whoever thought that a Duchess in France, a Queen in Russia, or an Empress in Austria, or any aristocratic woman was unsexed, or demeaned by occupying a high position under government? The controversy, to-day, is between women aristocratic and women democratic, and I claim that what is right for a Queen, an Empress or a Duchess, is right for the humblest of my country-women."

Would you be willing to admit, gentlemen, that women know less, have less virtue, less pride and dignity of character under Republican institutions than in the despotisms and monarchies of the old world? Your Codes and Constitutions savor of such an opinion. Fortunately, history furnishes a few saving facts, even under our Republican institutions. From a recent examination, by LUCY STONE, of the archives of the State of New Jersey, we learn that, owing to a liberal Quaker influence, women and negroes exercised the right of suffrage in that State thirty-one years—from 1776 to 1807—when “white males” ignored the constitution, and arbitrarily assumed the reigns of government. This act of injustice is sufficient to account for the moral darkness that seems to have settled down upon that unhappy State. During the dynasty of women and negroes, does history record any social revolution peculiar to that period? Because women voted there, was the institution of marriage annulled, the sancity of home invaded, cradles annihilated, and the stockings, like Governor MARCY’S pantaloons, mended by the State? Did the men of that period become mere satellites of the dinner-pot, the wash-tub or the spinning wheel? Were they dwarfed and crippled in body and soul, while their enfranchised wives and mothers became giants in stature and intellect? Did the children, fully armed and equipped for the battle of life, spring, Minerva-like, from the brains of their fathers? Were the laws of nature suspended? Did the sexes change places? Was everything turned upside down? No, life went on as smoothly in New Jersey as in any other State in the Union. And the fact that women did vote there, created so slight a ripple on the popular wave, and made so ordinary a page in history, that probably nine-tenths of the people of this country never heard of its existence, until recent discussions in the United States Senate brought out the facts of the case. In Kansas, women vote for school officers and are themselves eligible to the office of trustee. There is a resolution now before

the Legislature of Ohio to strike the words "white males" from the Constitution of that State. The Hon. Mr. NOEL, of Missouri, has presented a bill in the House of Representatives to extend suffrage to the women of the District of Columbia.

I think, Honorable Gentlemen, I have given you facts enough to show that you need not hesitate to give the ballot to the women of New York, on the ground that it is a new thing; for, as you see, the right has long ago been exercised by certain classes of women in many countries. And if it were a new thing, and had never been heard of before, that would be no argument against the experiment. Had the world never done a new thing, Columbus would not have discovered this country, nor the Ocean Telegraph brought our old enemy—Great Britain—within friendly speaking distance. When it was proposed to end slavery in this country, croakers and conservatives protested, because it was a new thing, and must of necessity produce a social convulsion. When it was proposed to give woman her rights of property in this State, the same classes opposed that on the same ground; but the spirit of the age carried both measures over their heads and "nobody was hurt."

You Republicans, cannot oppose our demand on that ground, for your present party-cry "negro suffrage" is a new thing, and startling too, in the ears of the Southern States, and a very inconsistent thing, so long as the \$250 qualification remains in your Constitution. "If you would know your faults," says CICERO, "ask your enemies." Hear His Excellency ANDREW JOHNSON, in his veto on the District of Columbia Bill, he says: "It hardly seems consistent with the principles of right and justice, that representatives of States where suffrage is either denied the colored man or granted to him on qualifications requiring intelligence or property, should compel the people of the District of Columbia to try an experiment which their own constituents have thus far shown

an unwillingness to try for themselves." Senator SUMNER, a leading radical, expresses the same opinion. In the debate on the admission of Nebraska, he says: "When we demand equal rights of the Southern States, we must not be so inconsistent as to admit any new State with a constitution disfranchising citizens on account of color. Congress must be itself just, if it would recommend it to others. Reconstruction must begin at home." Consistency is a jewel. Every thoughtful person must see that Northern representatives are in no condition to reconstruct the South, until their own State Constitutions are purged of all invidious distinctions among their citizens. As the fountain rises no higher than its source, how can New York press on South Carolina a civilization she has never tried herself. But say you, we can coerce the South to do what we have no right to force on a loyal State. Has not each State a right to amend her own Constitution and establish a genuine republic within her own boundaries? "Let each man mend one," says the old proverb, "and the world is mended." Let each State bring its own Constitution into harmony with the Federal Constitution, and the Union will be a republic.

We are soon to hold a convention to revise the Constitution of the State of New York; and it is the duty of the people to insist that it be so amended as to make all its citizens equal before the law. Could the Empire State now take the lead in making herself a genuine republic, all the States would, in time, follow her example, and the problem of reconstruction be thus settled to the satisfaction of all. Example is more powerful than precept in all cases. Were our Constitutions free from all class distinctions, with what power our representatives could now press their example on the Southern States. Is there anything more rasping to a proud spirit than to be rebuked for shortcomings by those who are themselves guilty of the grossest violations of law and justice? Does the North think it absurd for its women to vote and hold

office, the South thinks the same of its negroes. Does the North consider its women a part of the family to be represented by the "white male citizen," so views the South her negroes. And thus viewing them, the South has never taxed her slaves; but our chivalry never fail to send their tax-gatherers to the poorest widow that owns a homestead. Would you press impartial suffrage on the South, recognize it first at home. Would you have Congress do its duty in the coming session, let the action of every State Legislature teach them what that duty is. The work of this hour is a broader one than the reconstruction of the Rebel States. It is the lifting of the entire nation into higher ideas of justice and equality. It is the realization of what the world has never yet seen, a GENUINE REPUBLIC.

As the ballot is the key to reconstruction, a right knowledge of its use and power is the first step in the work before us. Hence, the consideration of the question of suffrage is the duty of every American citizen.

The legal disabilities to the exercise of suffrage (for persons of sound mind and body) in the several States, are five—age, color, sex, property and education.

As age depends on a fixed law, beyond the control of fallible man, viz., the revolution of the earth around the sun, it must be impartial, for, *nolens volens*, all men must revolve with their native planet; and as no Republican or Democratic majority can make the earth stand still, even for a Presidential campaign, they must in time perform that journey often enough to become legal voters. As the right to the ballot is not based on intelligence, it matters not that some boys of eighteen do know more than some men of thirty. Inasmuch as boys are not bound by any contract—except marriage—cannot sell a horse, or piece of land, or be sued for debt until they are twenty-one, this qualification of age seems to be in harmony with the laws of the land, and based on common sense.

As to color and sex, neither time, money or education

can make black white, or woman man; therefore, such insurmountable qualifications, not to be tolerated in a Republican government, are unworthy our serious consideration. "Qualifications," says Senator SUMNER, "cannot be in their nature permanent or insurmountable. Color cannot be a qualification any more than size, or quality of the hair. A permanent or insurmountable qualification is equivalent to a deprivation of the suffrage. In other words, it is the tyranny of taxation without representation; and this tyranny, I insist, is not intrusted to any State in the Union."

As to property and education, there are some plausible arguments in favor of such qualifications, but they are all alike unsatisfactory, illogical and unjust. A limited suffrage creates a privileged class, and is based on the false idea that government is the natural arbiter of its citizens, while in fact it is the creature of their will. In the old days of the Colonies when the property qualification was £5—that being just the price of a jackass—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN facetiously asked, "If a man must own a donkey in order to vote, who does the voting, the man or the donkey?" If reading and money-making were a sure gauge of character, if intelligence and virtue were twin sisters, these qualifications might do: but such is not the case. In our late war black men were loyal, generous and heroic without the alphabet or multiplication table, while men of wealth, educated by the nation, graduates of West Point, were false to their country and traitors to their flag. There was a time in England's history, when the House of Lords even, could neither read or write. Before the art of printing, were all men fools? Were the Apostles and martyrs worth \$250? The early Christians, the children of art, science and literature, have in all ages struggled with poverty, while they blessed the world with their inspirations. The Hero of Judea had not where to lay His Head!! As capital has ever ground labor to the dust, is it just and generous to disfranchise the poor and

ignorant because they are so? If a man cannot read, give him the ballot, it is schoolmaster. If he does not own a dollar give him the ballot, it is the key to wealth and power. Says LAMARTINE, "universal suffrage is the first truth and only basis of every national Republic." "The ballot," says Senator SUMNER, "is the columbiad of our political life, and every citizen who has it is a full-armed monitor."

But while such grand truths are uttered in the ears of the world, by an infamous amendment of the Federal Constitution, the people have sanctioned the disfranchisement of a majority of the loyal citizens of the nation. With sorrow we learn that the Legislature of New York has ratified this change of the Constitution.

Happily, for the cause of freedom, the organization we represent here to-day, "THE AMERICAN EQUAL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION," has registered its protest in the archives of the State against this desecration of the last will and testament of the Fathers. It was a mistake for you to confirm to-day what Congress proposed a year ago. Recent debates in the Senate show a hearty repentance for their past action, and an entire revolution in their opinions on this whole question. It was gratifying to find in the discussion of the District Franchise Bill, how unanimously the Senate favored the extension of suffrage. The thanks of the women of the Nation are especially due to Senator COWAN for his motion to strike out the word "male," and to the nine distinguished Senators who voted for his amendment. It was pleasant to see into what fraternal relations this question at once brought all opposing elements. The very able and exhaustive manner in which both Republicans and Democrats pressed their claims to the ballot, through two entire sessions of the Senate, is most encouraging to the advocates of the political rights of women.

In view of this liberal discussion in the Senate, and the recent action of Congress on the Territories, it is rather

singular that our Republican Governor, in referring to the Constitutional Convention, in his late message, while recommending consideration of many minor matters, should have failed to call attention to Article 2d, Section 1st of the Constitution, which denies the fundamental rights of citizenship. As the executive head of the party, in this State, whose political capital is "negro suffrage," it would have been highly proper for our worthy Governor to have given his opinion on that odious \$250 clause in the Constitution. No doubt our judiciary, our criminal legislation, our city governments need reforming; our railroads, prisons and schools need attention; but all these are of minor consideration to the personal and property rights of the man himself. Said LALOR SHIELDS, in the House of Commons "strike the Constitution to the center and the lawyer sleeps in his closet. But touch the cobwebs in Westminster Hall and the spiders start from their hiding places."

I have called your attention, Gentlemen, to some of the flaws in your Constitution that you may see that there is more important work to be done in the coming Constitutional Convention, than any to which Governor FENTON has referred in his message. I would also call your attention to the fact, that while His Excellency suggests the number of delegates at large to be chosen by the two political parties, he makes no provision for the representatives of women and "men of color" not worth \$250. I would, therefore, suggest to your honorable body that you provide for the election of an equal number of delegates at large from the disfranchised classes. But a response to our present demand does not legitimately thrust on you the final consideration of the whole, broad question of suffrage, on which many of you may be unprepared to give an opinion. The simple point we now press is this: that in a revision of our Constitution, when the State is, as it were, resolved into its original elements, ALL THE PEOPLE should be represented in the Convention which is

to enact the fundamental laws by which they are to be governed the next twenty years.

Women and negroes, being seven-twelfths of the people, are a majority; and, according to our Republican theory, are the rightful rulers of the nation. In this view of the case, honorable gentlemen, is it not a very unpretending demand we make, that we shall vote once in twenty years in revising and amending our State Constitution?

But, say you, the majority of women do not make the demand. Grant it. What then? When you established free schools, did you first ask the urchins of the State whether they were in favor of being transplanted from the street to the school house? When you legislated on the temperance question did you go to rum-sellers and drunkards, and ask if a majority of them were in favor of the Excise Law? When you proclaimed emancipation, did you go to slaveholders and ask if a majority of them were in favor of freeing their slaves? When you ring the changes on "negro suffrage" from Maine to California, have you proof positive that a majority of the freedmen demand the ballot? On the contrary, knowing that the very existence of Republican institution depends on the virtue, education and equality of the people, did you not, as wise statesmen, legislate in all these cases for the highest good of the individual and the nation? We ask that the same far-seeing wisdom may guide your decision on the question now before you. Remember, the gay and fashionable throng who whisper in the ears of statesmen, judges, lawyers, merchants, "*We have all the rights we want,*" are but the mummies of civilization, to be galvanized into life only by earthquakes and revolutions. Would you know what is in the soul of woman, ask not the wives and daughters of merchant princes; but the creators of wealth—those who earn their bread by honest toil—those who, by a turn in the wheel of fortune, stand face to face with the stern realities of life.

"If you would enslave a people," says CICERO, "first, through ease and luxury, make them effeminate." When you subsidize labor to your selfish interests, there is ever a healthy resistance. But, when you exalt weakness and imbecility above your heads, give it an imaginary realm of power, illimitable, unmeasured, unrecognized, you have founded a throne for woman on pride, selfishness and complacency, before which you may well stand appalled. In banishing Madame DE STAEL from Paris, the Emperor NAPOLEON, even, bowed to the power of that scepter which rules the world of fashion.

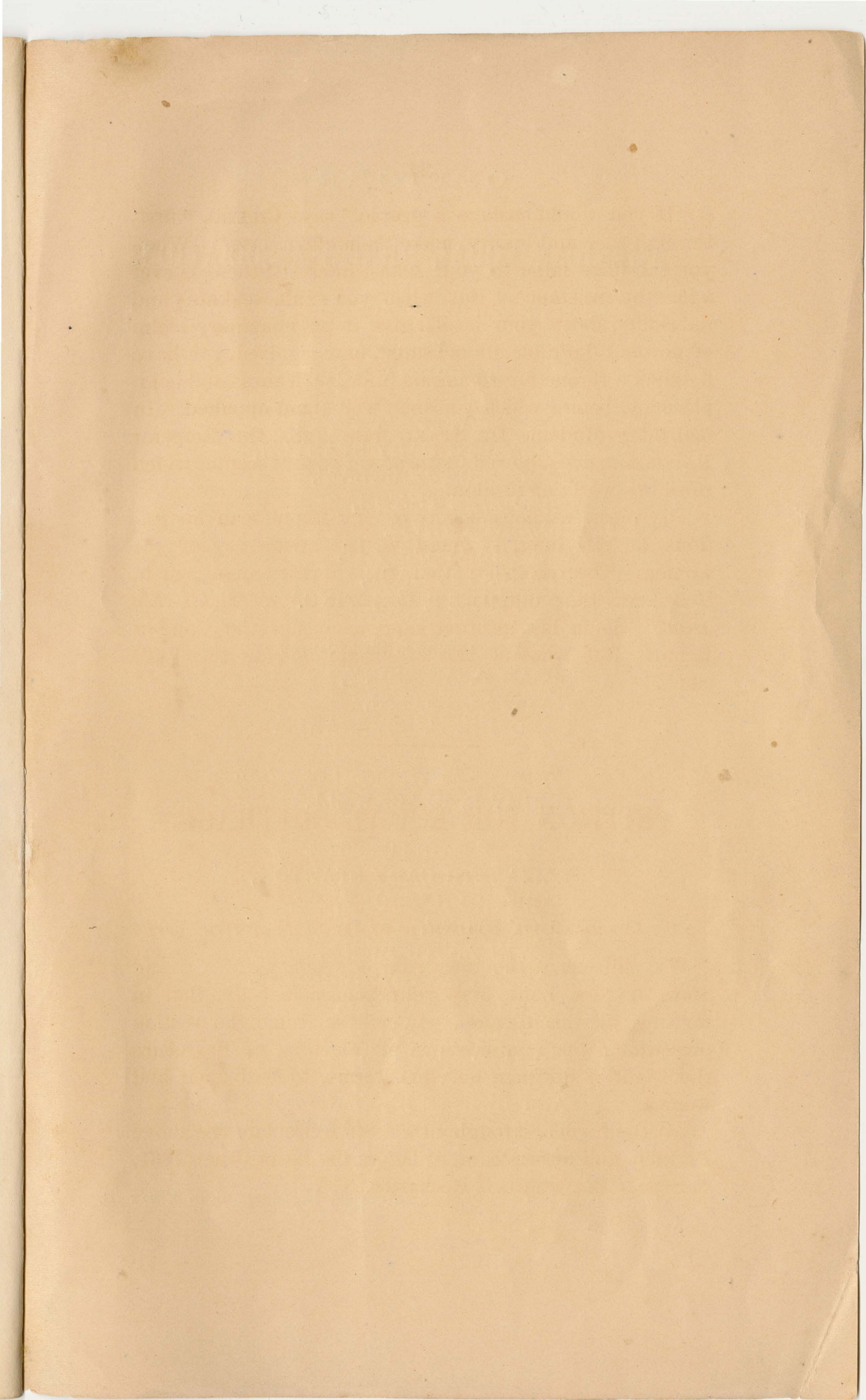
The most insidious enemy to our Republican institutions, at this hour, is found in the aristocracy of our women. The ballot-box, that great leveler among men, is beneath their dignity. "*They have all the rights they want.*" So, in his spiritual supremacy, has the Pope of Rome! But what of the multitude outside the Vatican!!!

PETITION FOR EQUAL SUFFRAGE.

To the Constitutional Convention of the State of New York:

WE, citizens of the town of , county of , and State of New York, pray your honorable body, that in revising the Constitution, you will so frame the section prescribing the qualifications of Electors, as to secure the Right of Suffrage on equal terms, to both men and women.

Let the friends, throughout the State circulate the above Petition, and return it, on or before the 1st of June, 1867, to SUSAN B. ANTHONY, Rochester, N. Y.



OFFICERS
OF THE
AMERICAN EQUAL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION.

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LUCRETIA MOTT.

VICE-PRESIDENTS.
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Contributions and communications should be addressed to SUSAN B.
ANTHONY, Rochester, N. Y.